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TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [MOPS](#) [PTER](#) [KWBG](#)

SUBJECT: EAC APPROVES CHANGES TO WEST BANK TRAVEL POLICY

Classified By: Consul General Jake Walles for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

¶1. (U) On July 1, 2009, the Consul General chaired a meeting of the Emergency Action Committee (EAC) to review West Bank travel policy. The meeting was attended by EXEC, RSO, POL, CONS, ORA, MGT, ECON, PD, USAID, USSC, DAO, MSG, and INL.

¶2. (SBU) This was the first review of West Bank travel policy since March 9, 2009. EAC members noted improvements in the security environment in the West Bank, due to improved operations of Palestinian Authority security forces (PASF). EAC members agreed that PASF continue to demonstrate increased capacity and operational effectiveness, having received additional training and equipment and shown strong motivation during recent security operations.

¶3. (SBU) The EAC reviewed several proposed revisions of West Bank travel policy in order to match our protective security posture to the reduced threat in many areas. The purpose of the proposed revisions is to ensure safe operations while freeing assets for expanded West Bank travel in support of mission goals. Specifically, EAC members reviewed: standard operating procedures for Area A "high threat" and "medium threat" zones; travel procedures in Jenin given recent improvements in the security environment there; travel to the West Bank after daylight hours; personal travel to Jericho by personnel under COM authority and their EFMs; and overnight stays in designated hotels in Bethlehem and Jericho.

¶4. (C) EAC members expressed support for the idea of lessening the "footprint" of West Bank protective security and expanding opportunities for travel. POL, ECON, INL, USSC, USAID, and PD each noted that the ability to conduct more meetings in the West Bank would have a dramatic, positive impact on reporting, outreach, assistance, and training activities. EAC members also noted that a reduction in protective security assets deployed for an individual mission would be noticed by Palestinian and international observers and would be understood as a reflection of an improved security environment. RSO recommended that post continue to maintain a dedicated advance on-site at venues in Area A "high-threat" zones. RSO also recommended deployment of a QRF to "medium-threat" zones whenever those assets are available.

¶5. (C) All EAC members supported the idea of reclassifying Jenin as a "medium threat" (from "high threat") zone in light of the improved security situation in the governorate.

¶6. (C) All reporting offices supported the idea of allowing travel to the West Bank after dark, noting that important

contact and representational work is often done after hours. RSO and ORA noted that some IDF checkpoints into Palestinian "Area A" close at dark, limiting egress options, and others become severely congested. RSO also noted that the PASF have a reduced capacity during nighttime hours, while the Israel Defense Forces are more likely to conduct incursion operations at night.

¶7. (S/NF) ORA and RSO reported that there are currently no active threats in Jericho and the last IDF incursion into Jericho occurred more than three years ago (March 2006). The Israeli checkpoint into/out of the city has been removed.

¶8. (SBU) Following the discussion, the EAC recommended and the Chief of Mission agreed to revise West Bank travel policy as follows:

-- Area A "High Threat" Zones: In order to reduce the "footprint" of protective security to the extent possible, travel will use a shared advance, that will not normally wait on-site for a principal's arrival, at venues recently and/or frequently visited.

-- Jenin will be moved from the category of Area A "high threat" to a "medium threat" zone.

-- Area A "Medium Threat" Zones: In order to reduce the "footprint", advance teams will not wait on-site for a traveler's arrival, and a shared advance will cover simultaneous moves in the same area; and a QRF will not deploy to Bethlehem or Ramallah when those assets are needed to support PRS travel. Mission members will be allowed to travel for official business after daylight hours on a routine basis to Ramallah and Bethlehem.

-- Personnel under COM authority will be allowed to stay overnight at the Bethlehem Intercontinental Hotel in conjunction with official travel.

-- Area A "Low Threat" Zones (Jericho): Post will discontinue use of PRS assets for official travel to Jericho, which will now be authorized using official vehicles with appropriate RSO notification. Personnel under COM authority will be allowed to stay overnight at the Jericho Intercontinental Hotel in conjunction with official travel.

-- Personnel under COM authority and their EFMs will be allowed non-official travel, via POV, to and from Jericho during daylight hours on specified days, following completion of the appropriate briefing and subject to notification requirements. Personnel under COM authority and their EFMs will be allowed to stay overnight at the Jericho Intercontinental Hotel on non-official travel, subject to the provisions noted above.

WALLES